

Historic, Archive Document

Do not assume content reflects current scientific knowledge, policies, or practices.

1.9
W37Ra

THE ABNORMAL WINTER WEATHER

A radio talk by J. B. Kincer, Weather Bureau, delivered in the Department of Agriculture period of the National Farm and Home Hour over a network of 47 associate NBC radio stations, Wednesday, March 2, 1932.

LIBRARY
RECEIVED

I know that all of you have heard, again and again, statements to the effect that our winters are not like they used to be, and that the old-fashioned winter appears to have gone forever. Well, the behavior of the weather in the eastern half of the United States, during the winter that closed meteorologically two days ago, would cast a pretty strong vote in the affirmative, if we were debating the subject. However, if you happen to live in the more western States, instead of the East, you probably would say "How come?", we have had a real old-fashioned winter out here". Again, here in the East, the winter has been almost exactly like that of 42 years ago, with about a toss-up for first place in warmth between this winter and that of 1889-90.

Country-wide reports, in just this morning, of temperature for the winter, as a whole, disclose some very interesting facts. In the Central and Eastern States it was not necessary this year to go South for the winter, as nature brought the South to us. For example, for the entire winter season, Philadelphia has enjoyed the usual climate of Greenville, S.C., and here in Washington the winter temperature has been the same as that usual to Atlanta, Ga., some 600 miles farther south. Pittsburgh and Columbus, Ohio, had Tennessee weather; St. Paul was shoved climatically south to Des Moines; Des Moines to Columbia, Mo.; Chicago to Springfield, and St. Louis to Memphis. In the State of New York, it may be mentioned that the Hudson River at Albany has been open all winter long, and records extending back to the year our beloved Washington was inaugurated as the First President of the United States, in 1789, show no other year with similar conditions.

On the other hand, the winter was far from mild and pleasant in the western part of the country. This is the usual habit of the weather, that is, opposite conditions tend to prevail in the East and the West. From the Rocky Mountains westward, it was cold and stormy, with unusually heavy snowfall, extending even into southern California where frequent and heavy artificial heating of orange and lemon groves was necessary to save the crops from frost. The winter started early out there, with some of the lowest temperatures of record for the month of November. Snowfall was mostly heavy, with depths as great as 14 feet reported from some mountain stations in California and Oregon. The heavy snowpack rather generally in the western mountains insures a good water supply for irrigation next summer.

In general, from economic and agricultural standpoints, the winter's weather was favorable, though there were a few unfortunate features. Economically, the persistence of mild, open weather over the eastern half of the country was unusually favorable under present conditions. While most of the main winter Wheat Belt has been bare of snow, fortunately, harmful cold waves have also been absent, and wheat came through the winter in good shape, as a rule, except in those parts of the western belt where drought has not been relieved, principally in western Nebraska, western Kansas, and northwestern Oklahoma. Winter truck crops in the South were favored, except for dryness in Florida, which has now been relieved. The deficiency of soil moisture, dating back to the 1930 drought, has been largely corrected by unusually

heavy rains nearly everywhere, except in the northwestern Great Plains, more particularly in Montana. This insures a favorable reserve supply of moisture with the advent of the active growing season. However, too much rain in the lower Mississippi Valley sections caused a rather serious flood situation, but there is now some improvement in this respect. Rainfall has been heavy in southern California where unfavorable dryness has been in evidence for several years.

Frequent winter rains have hampered the usual farm work, especially in the South where preparations for spring planting have been slow, and are considerably behind a normal year, but progress has been better recently. Livestock were favored in the eastern half of the country, but in the West conditions were decidedly unfavorable. From the Rocky Mountains westward, much winter range has been almost continuously snow covered, with cold and stormy weather, making heavy feeding necessary, because of restricted grazing. Feed has been scarce in many places, especially in the Northwest, because of last year's drought. Livestock have suffered, with considerable losses, but, with milder weather, the outlook improved during the past week.

Fruit trees are unfavorably advanced in the southern half of the country; some early fruit are now coming into bloom north to West Virginia and the Ohio River and to southern Oklahoma, but in the south Atlantic area where last fall was very dry, peach trees in commercial orchards continue relatively dormant, even as far south as Georgia.

We have had many inquiries as to what effect the warm winter is likely to have on this year's crops. This depends almost entirely on what happens during the next month or two. Wheat, in many places, is rather unfavorably advanced and too succulent to withstand best a possible hard freeze. Also fruit trees are becoming prematurely advanced to an unfavorable development, but possible harm to them, as in the case of wheat, depends on whether or not future damaging temperatures and late frost, which can not now be foreseen, occur. Otherwise, there is no apparent reason why the abnormally advanced state of vegetation, now a month or six weeks ahead of the season in many places, should prove, in the long run, detrimental.